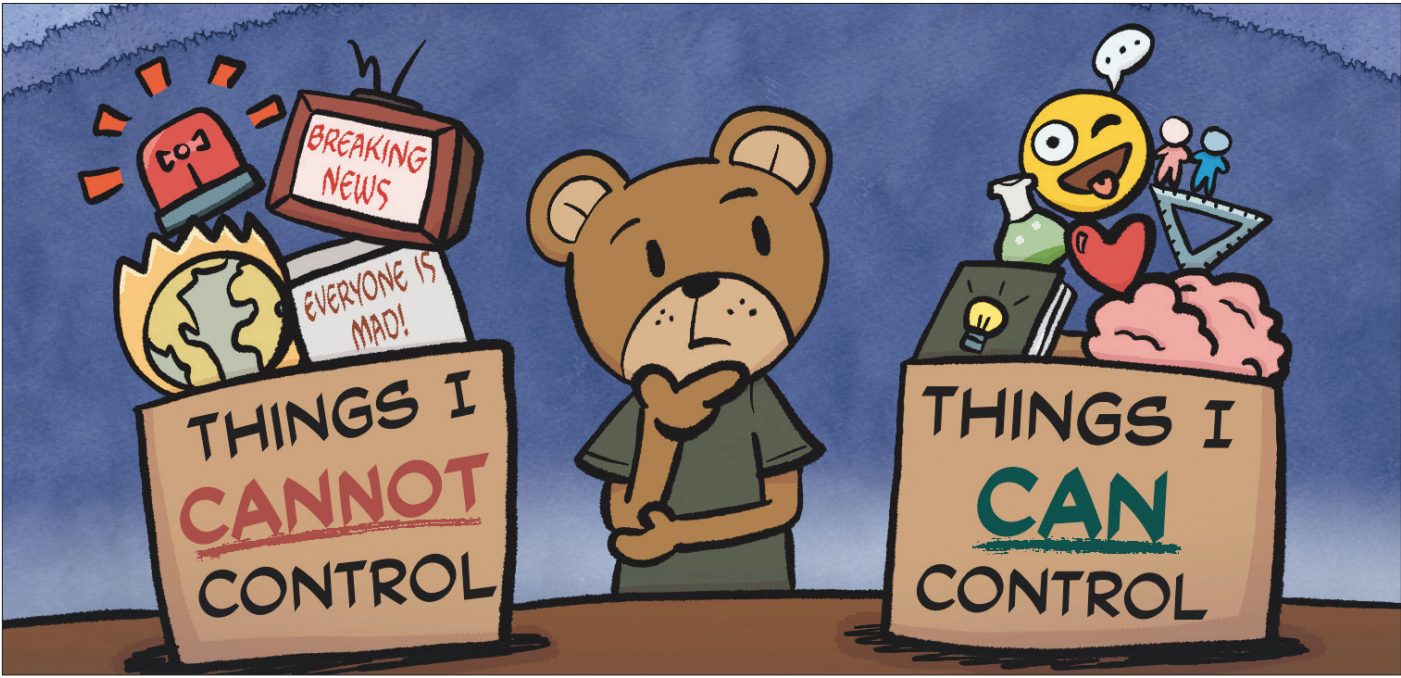


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James Ellis | Cartoonist

Don't let chaos win

Compartmentalization brings rejuvenation

THE EDITORIAL BOARD

The world is full of war, unrest, starvation and strife. America itself struggles with political turmoil, disunity and evil. While millions of things vie for our attention and beg to be fixed, one of our biggest defenses is compartmentalization.

It seems like every time you have something that you absolutely must get done, countless other things seem more important. There's an essay due tomorrow and suddenly you think you must be able to find the solution to world hunger. The day before a test, your biggest concern is how we are going to solve political disunity.

We on The Editorial Board care about these issues, and they are real problems that require attention. But the fact of the matter is that some things you don't have control over and some things you won't be able to find the solution to.

Compartmentalization is a "defense mechanism in which thoughts and feelings that seem to conflict or to be incompatible are isolated from each other in separate and apparently impermeable psychic

compartments," according to the American Psychological Association dictionary.

In other words, compartmentalizing means putting your work stress in a work box, your relationship issues in a relationship box, school deadlines in a school box and so on. If you find yourself bringing home your frustration over a bad grade and taking it out on your poor roommate, you might benefit from compartmentalizing your feelings. Compartmentalization can also mean putting your "the world is falling apart" feelings into a "deal with later" box or a "things I can't control" box.

Mental wellness storyteller Toketemu Ohwovoriole said compartmentalizing doesn't mean suppressing emotions. It's a method of weeding out the things that aren't productive at any given moment. It allows one to process and confront the emotions relevant at any given time without being overwhelmed by irrelevant feelings. It lets you prioritize the task at hand without being distracted by the ones you haven't started yet.

"It's not about ignoring your problems or bottling up

your emotions," Ohwovoriole wrote. "Instead, it's a way to organize your thoughts to stay present, focused, and emotionally balanced."

But be careful not to let your compartmentalization cross the line into emotional avoidance. It's important to address your emotions, but compartmentalizing them can help you decide which ones to address at what time.

According to an article by Mile High Psychiatry, compartmentalization is a helpful tool for emotional regulation, but it's just that — a tool. It shouldn't be used to avoid uncomfortable emotions simply because they're uncomfortable, and it shouldn't bury your emotions so deeply that they are suppressed rather than shelved.

"Problems arise when compartmentalization becomes a default strategy instead of a temporary tool," the article reads.

If you compartmentalize your despair over sickness in the world, you're not suppressing it, just shelving it until it needs to be addressed. You might view that shelved feeling as an Ebenezer for your future goal, motivating you through your undergraduate

studies and medical school. It'll spur you on until you are in a position to actually help fix sickness in the world.

It's important to have empathy for people who are suffering. It's admirable to have a drive to help fix those problems, but they can't all be fixed right now. Whatever stirs your empathy — political reform, the housing crisis, world hunger — compartmentalize it in a box you can revisit when you're ready. Baylor is full of students who are driven and passionate about changing the world, but often, your degree will help get you there.

Focus on what's in front of you. Use that focus to succeed, and follow that passion. Follow what stirs your empathy and take steps toward bringing change. If you want to see your government change for the better, it might start with paying attention in your political science class. If you want to help solve world hunger, your first step might be doing your biology homework. Then, one day, you may have the chance to change the label on that box from "things I can't control" to "things I'm working on changing."

Self-love culture is toxic

MARISA YOUNG
Focus Editor

The practice of "self-love" has become a defining movement in modern Western culture. Online influencers and self-help books alike encourage individuals to always prioritize themselves, become wholly independent and solve their own problems.

Self-love culture emerged alongside the rise of social media, where comparison is easier than ever. As a result, many young men and women are experiencing increased insecurity, often manifesting as anxiety and depression.

While self-love culture seeks to address these struggles by building one's relationship with the internal self, I believe it frequently worsens the very problems it claims to heal.

In typical Western fashion, self-love culture elevates independence above all else. Its underlying narrative suggests that relying on others is a weakness and that healing must happen entirely internally. Buying into this mindset risks cultivating hyper-independence, a state in which individuals avoid vulnerability and seeking help from others entirely. While hyper-independence can resemble resilience, it ultimately breeds isolation.

Healing of any kind, including insecurity, requires some degree of reliance on others. Contrary to what self-love culture suggests, asking for help is not a failure but an act of courage and willingness to change.

In its most extreme forms, self-love culture can also devolve into self-centeredness, bordering on narcissism. When personal security becomes an individual's highest priority, things like accountability, empathy and compassion go out the window.

On social media platforms, self-love frequently presents itself through image-focused habits such as intense fitness routines or elaborate skincare routine.

While these practices are not inherently harmful, using them to address insecurity can create a vicious cycle of self-centered behavior that ultimately deepens the issue. Rooting self-worth in appearance itself is an act of insecurity; altering one's appearance can never actually address the real problem. Growth occurs when individuals anchor their security in something larger than themselves, such as a moral framework or a relationship with God.

For Christians, Scripture consistently encourages us to adopt an attitude of surrender rather than self-sufficiency. In 2 Corinthians 12:9, God tells the Apostle Paul, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." This message directly counters self-love culture's mantra of independence.

Instead, the Bible teaches us that wholeness is found through utter dependence on God and engagement within Christian community. Scripture reminds us that Jesus bestows worth on His children that is beyond our control. He gives us a grace that is not deserved and a love that does not fluctuate with appearance or accomplishments.

Taking care of oneself is important, but self-love culture will never truly fix insecurity. Healing requires community and the realization that there exists something far greater than oneself.

Handling current politics as a Christian

SOPHIA MONSON
Social Media Editor

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement has dominated media coverage in recent months amid widespread controversy. Alongside this attention has come a resurgence of xenophobia and bias, disproportionately affecting immigrants.

While some may argue reducing the presence of undocumented immigrants in the U.S. is a legitimate goal, the methods used to pursue that mission have caused irreversible damage to communities across the country. These developments coincide with hate crime rates rising nearly 100% since 2015, according to the FBI.

For followers of Christ, the actions of ICE and those who fall in line with their beliefs

should sound the alarm of injustice and behavior that runs counter to Christian values.

One recent instance that drew national attention was the fatal shooting of Renee Good by an ICE officer on Jan. 14, 2026. This case follows other incidents, like the deportation of an American child undergoing treatment for metastatic cancer in April. Whatever ICE's original mission may have been, it has been increasingly difficult to separate immigration enforcement from violence, fear and systemic harm inflicted on vulnerable communities.

For Christians, the Bible gives us the guiding principles on how to live well with one another. It calls us to hold a loving willingness to see the humanity in those around us. At a time when conversations about immigration and national identity dominate American political discourse, looking to Scripture to find guidance and clarity presents itself to Christians as a dire and urgent matter.

Scripture tells us to open our arms to those foreign to ourselves. Leviticus 19:33 says, "When a foreigner resides among you in

your land, do not mistreat them. The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt."

Christians must take this to heart and look beyond national labels or disagreements of policy. In doing so, we see the shared dignity in every person who sets foot on American soil.

To act with love is the most Christian thing we can do in our lives. We are called to love when it is easy and natural, but also when it is unpopular or inconvenient. We are propelled further from the values we preach when we turn our noses up at those we deem lesser than ourselves. It might be the greatest failure of our generation to allow a dedication to the government reign above our mission in Christ and each other.

With Christ centered, we can walk with our brothers and sisters in love, charity and adoration. Before reducing someone to a pejorative label, recall that we come from the Father who calls us to love first.

Love first, hate never.

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* Asterisks indicate members of The Editorial Board

Popcorn with a Purpose

Heavenly Voices Choir hosts popcorn-themed fundraiser for Gospel Fest

ABBY RATHBURN
Staff Writer

Running from Tuesday, Jan. 20 to Friday, Jan. 23, Heavenly Voices Gospel Choir is hosting an online fundraiser titled Popcorn with a Purpose to raise money for Gospel Fest.

Over the past few years, the club has not run many fundraiser opportunities, so this is a relatively new step for them. The idea was pitched by their secretary, as the quick and easy online access seemed like a great way to raise some extra money to host Gospel Fest.

According to Sylvia Jones, a Heavenly Voices member and a third year doctoral student from Auburn, Wash., Gospel Fest is the choir's biggest event of the year.

"Last year, we had our biggest turnout in quite a few years, so we're excited for this year, too," Jones said.

They will host Gospel Fest Feb. 21. Held in Truett Seminary, the event will feature performances by universities across Texas, including the University of North Texas, TCU and others.

Last year, the event was held at a historically Black church, and Jones said it was packed, a true testament of a desire to hear gospel music.

"We see the gift that God's giving us of this community on campus, this desire to hear gospel music, and we're trying to steward that well and understand that," Jones said. "This fundraiser is preparing us to be able to put on Gospel Fest, not just for ourselves, not just for Baylor, but for the



Photo courtesy of Sylvia Jones

CRESCENDO Gospel ministry Heavenly Voices is hosting a fundraiser to support Gospel Fest, the group's biggest event of the year.

Waco community at large."

Students, faculty and anyone else looking to donate can purchase from a member's storefront, and popcorn will be shipped to them as a thank-you. Fifty percent of all proceeds go directly toward Heavenly Voices' initiative.

Jones said Heavenly Voices hopes to raise \$275 — a number they have had planned all semester.

"It's small, but we can do it," Jones said.

That goal is one small piece of a much larger story of the organization's purpose and history on campus, according to an article from The Baylor Line.

"Heavenly Voices represents a continuance in the tradition of Black sacred song," the article reads. "Styles will change from generation to generation and so will music tastes, but there are performance practices and cultural emblems that transfer

and maintain value."

Originally founded by Tonja Carpenter in 1988, this club was intended to be a place where students could come to experiment with gospel music. Over the years, it has continued to bring together students in a collaboration of song performance and faith.

Queens, N.Y., senior Monica Malas, a church music major, said Heavenly Voices has been a place of experimentation. Different

from the type of music she studies all day in her classes, she gets to participate in something much more "freeing and very experimental."

"There [are] a couple of things that were really intriguing at first, but I will say the community aspect has been a very big part of it," Malas said. "Everyone is very interconnected and we try to make newcomers feel as welcome as possible."

Community is a central

theme of Heavenly Voices, providing students with a home where they feel free to express themselves. Heavenly Voices ministers through music in hopes of touching the lives of others in a unique way, Malas said.

"When it comes to HV, it's just a place of safety," Malas said. "It's a place of just really resting in the presence of the Lord ... When it comes to what we sing in HV, it's very freeing."

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Associated Press

LEGACY Former five-star quarterback DJ Lagway is taking the reins of his childhood team after transferring from Florida. His father, Derek Lagway Sr., played running back for the Bears from 1997-01.

Former 5-star QB headlines incoming transfer class

JEFFREY COHEN
Sports Writer

Junior quarterback DJ Lagway was born into a family that bled green and gold. His father, Derek Lagway Sr., was a running back for Baylor from 1997 to 2001.

Lagway's ties to the Bears remained strong as he grew up. Baylor legend Robert Griffin III posted a picture of himself next to a young Lagway when the transfer signal-caller initially committed to Baylor. Lagway also heavily considered Baylor as the No. 1 quarterback in the nation coming out of Willis High School.

Instead, he took his talents east to Florida. He struggled to protect the football in two years with the Gators, throwing 23 interceptions to 28 touchdowns.

"He had the injury in the off-season, and people just want to turn on the film, press play, and it always go exactly how you want it to, but there's real life that happens," Florida State head coach Mike Norvell said before the Seminoles' matchup against Florida. "You see the arm talent. You see the size, the ability to extend plays. He's a dangerous player to have to go against."

Lagway decided to return to his home state and to the school he represented growing up after entering the transfer portal. The four-star transfer sits atop Baylor's No. 33 transfer portal class. The Bears have 29 players incoming with 33 departing following the 2025 season.

Lagway is not alone as an offensive newcomer. Head coach Dave Aranda and his staff also brought in a trio of three-star wide receivers with starting experience.

"Quarterbacks need weapons," Griffin told 365 Sports. "It's not their job to recruit. It's their job to play. You've got to show them they're stepping into a great situation."

Colorado transfer Dre'lon Miller leads the group with 52 receptions for 435 yards and four touchdowns in his

two seasons in Boulder. The 6-foot-1 receiver has the build to be a physical presence despite limited involvement in the Buffaloes' 3-9 season.

Following Miller is former Kentucky wideout Hardley Gilmore IV. Gilmore IV flipped his commitment from in-state rival Louisville to Baylor on Jan. 12. He tallied 34 catches for 466 yards and two touchdowns in two seasons as a Wildcat. He ranked second in the team in 2026 with 28 catches for 313 yards.

While trending up in his on-field production, Gilmore IV did have off-the-field issues last offseason. He was charged with misdemeanor assault last January and was dismissed from Nebraska in April for undisclosed reasons — Husker head coach Matt Rhule said at the time that it was "nothing outside the program, nothing criminal or anything like that" — leading him back to Lexington.

Rounding out the wide receiver trio is Oklahoma State transfer Gavin Freeman. He broke out for the Cowboys in 2025 with a team-high 53 receptions, 481 yards and four touchdowns despite his 5-foot-8 stature. Freeman flipped to Baylor on Jan. 15, five days after his initial commitment to Tennessee.

The newcomers will have big shoes to fill, as the Bears' top-five pass-catchers from 2025 have exhausted their eligibility.

Baylor also bolstered its offensive line with six incoming transfers, led by former Texas interior lineman Nate Kibble. The three-star stands at 6-foot-3, 330 pounds. He appeared in three games for the Longhorns after not seeing the field his freshman season.

Pairing with Kibble on the inside is Yakiri Walker, who transferred from Memphis after starting all 13 games at center in 2025. The 6-foot-2, 295-pound lineman allowed four sacks and 28 pressures in 881 snaps.

Three-stars Asher Hale (South

Alabama) and Lawson Petty (Incarnate Word) round out the interior offensive linemen.

The Bears also tabbed two offensive tackles. Toledo transfer Cole Rhett started in 24 games over the past two seasons, helping the Rockets rank as the best passing offense in the Mid-American Conference in both campaigns.

Former UAB Blazer Logan Moore started 11 games in 2025 at right tackle. The 6-foot-8, 290-pound lineman was the first commit for Baylor in the portal cycle.

The Bears are looking to revamp the offensive line after center Coleton Price transferred to Kentucky and tackle Sean Thompkins left for LSU.

On the other side of the ball, Baylor also bolstered its secondary in the transfer portal, locking in three safeties and two cornerbacks.

Daniel Cobbs leads the group of safeties, recording 39 tackles and a team-leading three interceptions for Kansas State in 2025. He saw limited action as a freshman with only seven tackles and an interception.

Alongside Cobbs is his Wildcat teammate Colby McCalister, who missed all of 2025 with a knee injury he sustained in the preseason. He played in every game in the previous two seasons and racked up 51 tackles, two pass breakups, a forced fumble and a fumble recovery.

The final safety, Austin Ausberry, has totaled three tackles in 24 career games. Ausberry spent two seasons at Auburn before transferring to LSU for the past two seasons.

The two cornerbacks are Oklahoma transfer Devon Jordan and Kansas State transfer Jayden Rowe. Jordan recorded 13 tackles and a sack for the Sooners in 2025, while Rowe tallied three tackles in his only season for the Wildcats.

The Bears also added four defensive linemen and two edge rushers to strengthen their presence in the trenches. They ranked last in the Big 12 with 12 sacks and are

Notable transfers	
IN:	OUT:
QB DJ Lagway (Florida)	RB Bryson Washington (Auburn)
WR Dre'lon Miller (Colorado)	LB Keaton Thomas (Ole Miss)
EDGE Garrick Ponder (Colorado)	C Coleton Price (Kentucky)
IOL Nate Kibble (Texas)	OT Sean Thompkins (LSU)
S Daniel Cobbs (Kansas State)	S DJ Coleman (Florida)
CB Devon Jordan (Oklahoma)	DL DK Kalu (Florida)
DL Kamren Washington (Texas State)	S Carl Williams IV (Oregon)

losing linemen Jackie Marshall, who exhausted his eligibility, and DK Kalu, who transferred to Florida.

Former Texas State defensive tackle Kamren Washington leads the interior group after posting 15 tackles and a sack for the Bobcats. Jamaal Whyce Jr. broke out for Marshall in 2025 with 33 tackles, 2.5 sacks and a fumble recovery. Jordan Mack recorded 10 tackles and a sack at defensive end for Coastal Carolina. Zavion Hardy, the fourth defensive lineman, saw action in one game for the Gamecocks in 2025.

Former Southern Mississippi edge rusher Garrick Ponder is the third-highest rated incoming transfer to Baylor. He tallied 37 tackles, 3.5 sacks and a forced fumble last season.

Ponder is paired with Kansas State transfer Ryan Davis, the fourth Wildcat to follow former Wildcat defensive coordinator Joe Klanderman to Waco. He recorded 14 tackles and four sacks in 2025, and should help strengthen Baylor's underwhelming pass rush from the previous season.



Sam Gassaway | Photo Editor

BLUEBONNET BATTLE Baylor will host rival TCU on Oct. 17. The Bears lead the all-time series in Waco, 35-34-5.

Big 12 releases 2026 football schedule

MARISSA ESSENBURG
Sports Writer

Just 13 days after adding former five-star quarterback and Florida transfer DJ Lagway, Baylor football took another step toward the future Wednesday morning when the Big 12 unveiled the Bears' 2026 schedule.

The Bears will host six of their 12 regular-season games at McLane Stadium during the 2026 campaign.

The Bears will begin the year in familiar fashion, taking on Auburn on Sept. 5 at Mercedes-Benz Stadium in Atlanta, marking an early Power Four test. The Tigers beat Baylor in the 2025 season opener in Waco, 38-24; the Bears will have a chance to respond in kind to open next season.

Baylor returns to Waco for a three-game home stand beginning Sept. 12 against Prairie View A&M, marking the first-ever meeting between the two programs. The Bears will close out non-conference play Sept. 19 against Louisiana Tech.

Big 12 play opens Sept. 26, as Baylor hosts Colorado and welcomes head coach Deion Sanders to Waco for the first time since he took over the program in 2023. The meeting renews a series that last delivered a dramatic finish in 2024, when the Buffaloes escaped with a 38-31 overtime win in Boulder after a Hail Mary forced extra time and a goal-line fumble sealed the outcome.

Conference play then carries Baylor west, sending the team to Tempe, Ariz., on Oct. 3 for its first Big 12 road test against

Arizona State.

With star wideout and former Big 12 Offensive Newcomer of the Year Jordyn Tyson announcing his return to the Sun Devils for his final season, the Bears will look to contain the him after he sparked Arizona State's 27-24 win in the teams' last meeting, hauling in seven receptions, including a 19-yard game-winning touchdown.

After a bye week, Baylor returns home Oct. 17 to host Big 12 foe TCU in a series the Horned Frogs narrowly lead 60-54-7. The matchup brings the rivalry back to Waco for the first time since the Bears hit a walk-off field goal to win 37-34 in the teams' last meeting at McLane Stadium.

A return to the road awaits Baylor on

Sports

Baseball buddies reunite at Baylor

Middle infield duo’s ties help strengthen chemistry, lead young team

JEFFREY COHEN
Sports Writer

Middle infielders Pearson Riebock and Travis Sanders first met over what unites many teenage boys: video games.

“Me and Travis met when I was probably like 14 years old,” said Riebock, a sophomore. “We were playing video games together, and we had a mutual connection with a friend.”

Their friendship was not limited to animated characters on a screen. The pair remained close throughout high school, as Riebock played at Rockwall High School and Sanders at Copperas Cove High School. They eventually united at Baylor after Sanders transferred from Texas Tech and Riebock came in as a freshman.

“We had always kept up with each other through the years,” Riebock said. “He transferred [to Baylor], and I ended up coming here, and it was just kind of like a small world.”

The two friends broke out for the Bears in their first season in Waco. Both were awarded All-Big 12 honorable mention as Sanders slugged eight home runs and 25 RBIs with a .335 batting average and Riebock finished the season with a .306 average and 32 RBIs.

“I kind of just came in and didn’t really know too much,” Riebock said. “It was a really fun year, and I wouldn’t trade anything for it.”

What started as a friendship that bonded through headsets and controllers has led to two breakout players stationed next to each other on the diamond. Their chemistry off the field has already played a role in their performance.

“This fall, especially playing middle infield together, our connection [has] just been super tight, and I feel like we know each other so well,” Riebock said.

Sanders and Riebock are expected to command the middle of the diamond with the departure of infielders Tyriq Kemp and Jack Little.

Sanders, who has played shortstop for most of his career, is returning to the position after playing second base last year.

“Whenever I had my exit meeting last year after the season, [head coach Mitch Thompson] asked me and said, ‘Do you want to move to shortstop?’” said Sanders, now a redshirt junior. “Ever since that day, I’ve been at shortstop, and it should be good. Back to my old roots.”

Riebock is moving from third to second base. He also expects to be utilized at multiple other positions throughout the season, as well, after playing infield and outfield in the fall. Riebock said he can “do really anything that the team needs.”

The infielders also serve as leaders for a Baylor team that has 17 new players, including nine true freshmen.



LEADER Sophomore middle infielder Pearson Riebock high-fives teammates in a game against UT Arlington on March 25, 2025.

“We got a lot of new players in, and we had to ... mesh together,” Sanders said. “There’s always turnover. We had a hard fall, and we worked.”

They are now using their experience to help their teammates assimilate more easily into the program and the life of being a college baseball player.

“Last year, coming in, I had no clue or any expectation,” Riebock said. “Some of these freshmen are in the exact same position ... I know exactly where they’re coming from.”

Riebock, along with fifth-year outfielder Ty Johnson and junior catcher JJ Kennett, formed a special bond with the newcomers early. The three returners came back to Waco in July because they did not play in a summer league.

“It was only me, Ty Johnson and JJ Kennett, as far as returners that were back,” Riebock said. “We were hanging out with all these freshmen and the transfers, so I got super close with them over the summer.”

Sanders and Riebock were

thrown into the fire fairly early last season. Both cemented themselves into the starting lineup within the first few weeks of the 2025 season. They hope to use that experience to guide newcomers who will have the opportunity to play consistently.

Thompson mentioned names like redshirt freshmen Hunter Snow and Brytton Clements, along with true freshmen Dylan Perez, TJ Woodson and Bo Caraway, as guys that could receive substantial playing time for the Bears in 2026.

Legendary Baylor men’s golf coach McGraw retires

DYLAN FINK
Sports Writer

Highly decorated Baylor men’s golf coach Mike McGraw announced his retirement Wednesday afternoon to take care of his wife of 30 years, Pam McGraw, who has to take dialysis three times a week for five hours at a time.

“I am stepping away from coaching to help [my wife] Pam with her health issues,” McGraw said. “I need to be there for her.”

McGraw has spent over forty years coaching men’s golf at both the high school and collegiate levels, including the past 11 at Baylor. In his 28 years coaching at the Division I level, McGraw won three NCAA national championships while competing in the NCAA championship tournament 21 times.

McGraw, a Ponca City, Okla., native, played collegiate golf at Central Oklahoma with dreams of becoming a professional golfer. When he saw that door closing, a new passion of helping others reach that goal became his purpose.

“A lot of people have the dream of being a professional

golfer, so I thought maybe I could help kids get closer to the dream than I did,” McGraw said in a 2025 interview with The Lariat. “My failed professional career served as a desire to help these kids that I coach reach higher heights.”

McGraw began coaching as an assistant at the high school level in 1984 and became a head coach in 1994 at North HS in Edmond, Okla. There he led the program to three state titles in four years before joining Oklahoma State as an assistant.

From 2006-13, McGraw served as the head men’s golf coach at Oklahoma State, leading the Pokes to a national championship in his first season.

McGraw has achieved his dream of helping budding golfers find their path to the pros, as he has produced and worked with a number of notable players on the PGA Tour. Household names such as Rickie Fowler and Charles Howell III, as well as young stars like former Bear Johnny Keefer, have all credited McGraw with their success at the highest level.

“It would be very hard for you to find someone that’s a bigger Coach McGraw fan

than I am,” PGA veteran Ben Crane said told the Lariat in 2025. “He’s one of the greatest coaches in the history of golf. If I had been able to play for Coach McGraw, well, that would’ve been a dream.”

McGraw took Baylor golf to new heights. When he came to Waco, the Bears had made five NCAA national championship tournament appearances in program history. McGraw led the Bears to six of the past nine.

“Any list of the most influential leaders in college golf for the past generations has to include Coach McGraw,” Baylor Athletic Director Doug McNamee said. “We saw that firsthand here in his dedication to excellence on the course, in the classroom, and in leading young men to successful careers in golf and beyond. We are deeply grateful for his service to the Baylor Family and wish him all the best as he enters this well-deserved next chapter.”

Assistant men’s golf coach Ryan Murphy will act as interim head coach for the rest of the spring season. The Bears journey to Montgomery on Feb. 9 to compete in the Bentwater Classic.

dramatic in-game swings.

The Bears then head back on the road Nov. 14 to face BYU, continuing a series that has produced tight finishes since BYU’s addition to the Big 12. It will be the sixth meeting between the programs, with BYU winning the last two, including a double-overtime contest in Provo, Utah, in 2022.

The home slate wraps up Nov. 21, as Baylor hosts College Football Playoff quarterfinalist and reigning Big 12 Champion Texas Tech in the final regular-season game in Waco.

The season closes Nov. 28 in Houston. The Cougars ended the Bears’ 2025 campaign with a 31–24 heartbreaker in Waco.

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A sip-by-sip review of 5 Waco chai lattes

STACIE BOYLS
Arts & Life Writer

From sweet to spice, the chai latte has been a reliable coffee alternative for drink enjoyers across the U.S. While Waco has a wide variety of drink spots, I set out to find the best chai, ultimately rating them based on affordability, presentation and taste.

Each category is rated on a scale of 1 to 10, with five representing an average. This week, Common Grounds, Bru, Pinewood Coffee Bar, Heritage Coffee and For Keeps were put to the test of creating a delicious coffee house staple.

COMMON GROUNDS

Common Grounds posted the lowest overall score of the group, earning a 5.3 out of 10. Priced at \$5.01, it was the most affordable option, receiving a 7 out of 10 for affordability. However, the drink fell short in both presentation and flavor, scoring 4 out of 10 for presentation and 5 out of 10 for taste. The chai was watered down, muting the spice profile. The spices were delicious but failed to shine through the watery chai spice.

BRU ARTISAN COFFEE WORKS

Bru followed closely behind with an overall score of 5.5 out of 10. Its \$5.41 chai earned a 5 out of 10 for affordability and a 6 out of 10 for presentation, aided by a delicious and visible spice dusting. Despite this, the drink received a 5.5 out of 10 for taste, again impacted by a lack of concentration and watered-down spice profile.

PINEWOOD COFFEE BAR

Pinewood offered a more consistent experience, earning a 6 out of 10 overall. Priced at \$5.41, the chai scored 5 out of 10 for affordability but stood out for its execution. Pinewood earned a 7 out of 10 for both presentation and taste, delivering a more balanced cup with fuller flavor and stronger visual appeal. Ultimately, this was a decent chai.



Caleb Garcia | Photographer

CHILLS An ice cold chai tea latte is a delicious alternative for coffee drinkers who want a unique and flavorful experience without the caffeine.

HERITAGE COFFEE

Heritage emerged as the top performer among the cafes evaluated, earning a 7 out of 10 overall. While it was the least affordable option at \$7.04, scoring a 4 out of 10 for affordability, the chai excelled in every other category. Heritage earned the highest presentation score at 9 out of 10 and an 8 out of 10 for taste, offering a rich, well-spiced drink that justified its higher price point. The latte art added an artisanal visual while the rich spices of the chai melded beautifully with the creamy milk. If you're a chai latte enthusiast, this is a must-try spot for you.

FOR KEEPS COFFEE

For Keeps Coffee offered a mixed experience. The chai's notably pale appearance drew criticism, resulting in the group's lowest presentation score of 3 out of 10. While the flavor was described as enjoyable, it lacked intensity, earning a 6 out of 10 for taste. Priced at \$5.41, it landed squarely in the middle of the affordability range, making it a decent option for chai connoisseurs. The most distressing part of this chai was its color, which was pale and offered very little visual appeal. The taste, however, combatted the visual folly of this chai and provided a pleasant experience.

STARBUCKS

While Starbucks provides an acceptable beverage, it's usually nothing artisanal or high-end compared to local counterparts. Their chai, however, is a dark horse. It was shockingly affordable at \$5.04, the second-cheapest on the list. The taste was solid at 6 out of 10, not too watered down, with fragrant spices present. It's definitely on the sweet side but not overbearingly so. The presentation was average, with a 5 out of 10 rating, and what you'd expect from a hot Starbucks beverage. Overall, this chai scored 6 out of 10. While it's not the artisanal experience of Pinewood, it is a reliable choice for a chai.

Online thrift store Bear Threads mixes sustainability, inclusivity

KALENA REYNOLDS
Arts & Life Editor

Katie Valenzuela combines fashion with sustainability with her business, Bear Threads. Originally founded in late November 2025, Valenzuela set out to provide secondhand clothes to the Waco and Baylor communities via her Instagram @Bear_Threads. As both an avid shopper and a senior marketing specialist in brand integration at Baylor, she has used her knowledge of the community to provide a reliable place to buy secondhand clothes.

The inspiration for Valenzuela's business was born from a thrifted yellow sweater that she frequently received compliments on. When

“Sizing is kind of fake and it doesn't make a lot of sense sometimes and a shirt that fits you in one brand, in like an extra small, might fit you as like an extra large in another brand.”

KATIE VALENZUELA
BUSINESS OWNER

sharing with her co-workers that the sweater was secondhand, most responses were shock.

“A couple of my friends and colleagues said they never have luck with stuff like that and then they don't have time,” Valenzuela said. “And I love clothes, I love dressing fun, I love doing something quirky ... which then kind of led me to joking around with my friends and saying, ‘Oh, I should go thrifting and do a little thrift page that way people can just buy the stuff I find.’”

While therapy comes in the form of shopping for Valenzuela, Bear Threads provided her a medium to hone in on her love of fashion details and slow her, otherwise normally racing, thoughts down. Valenzuela also decided to lean into the Baylor-adjacent audience because she has multiple other friends running online thrift shops outside the Baylor niche.

“No one really had a specific like thrift it, have it kind of like within Baylor colors and branding and sphere or it's something that's kind of out of the box when it comes to dressing ... so it just felt like a perfect fit,” Valenzuela said.

Green and gold is obviously a staple theme for Bear Threads, as Valenzuela tailors to her community, however, she also has a variety of neutrals and pieces meant for people all around the U.S.

“I've also had people who just like what I've thrifted, and so they're in other places of the country, and I just ship to them,” Valenzuela said.

As thrifting becomes more of a trend, longtime friend and online resale shop employee Carli Conner said COVID-19 created a significant shift in how people buy clothes and ultimately led consumers to thrift more.

“I think how Katie is doing it ... is more accessible to people, and especially people that don't want to



Sam Gassaway | Photo Editor

FASHION FRENZY Katie Valenzuela combines fashion with sustainability with her business, Bear Threads.

go out to a store,” Conner said.

Conner also said thrifting is a great way to find your personal style in an affordable, environmentally friendly way.

“It does help the planet, but also, I think our feed is so oversaturated with fast fashion, and it's things that are really trendy, but they won't last.”

Conner said she finds most people throw their fast-fashion clothing away by the end of the season, either because it didn't last or because it's no longer trendy, whereas high-quality pieces can last much longer.

“I think the difference is years, I mean, I'm about to be 31, and I have pieces from when I was 15,” she said.

Each clothing piece is listed on Valenzuela's Instagram, and she accepts Venmo, Cash App, Zelle or PayPal for payment. For Waco residents, Valenzuela delivers the pieces to the buyer's front porch.

As Valenzuela's business continues to grow, she hopes to prioritize inclusivity with a wide range of sizes and items for different genders while mixing her love for Baylor into the mix.

“Sizing is kind of fake and it doesn't make a lot of sense sometimes and a shirt that fits you in one brand, in like an extra small, might fit you as like an extra large in another brand,” Valenzuela said.

While Valenzuela is currently working on an online doctorate program, she said she hopes to continue her business in the future.

“I think it gives me a lot of energy right now, and it's fun, and who knows what the next four or five years of my program are gonna be,” Valenzuela said. “I just started my PhD last August, so I still got a lot of time with it, and we'll see where it goes.”

Overall, Valenzuela said that the customers are the part of the business she enjoys the most.

“It honestly just makes me really happy when someone buys something because it's also like, ‘I hope it has a great life with you,’” Valenzuela.

Baylor professors make Oscars shortlist

KALENA REYNOLDS
Arts & Life Editor

Assistant Professor of Theatre and Film Sam Henderson and Senior Lecturer of Film and Digital Media Maverick Moore have been collaborating as friends and colleagues for over 10 years, both as professors at Baylor and on independent projects.

While Henderson and Moore have worked extensively in the short film space — while also co-teaching a class on it in the film department — the most recent project for the duo, a short film titled “Ado,” has made the shortlist for Best Live Action Short Film at the Oscars.

While the short film has found enormous success, Henderson said he originally set out to make a feature film for his next project. “We were intent on ... making a feature film debut, and it was just this chance conversation, this chance meeting I had with my mom relative to school shootings,” Henderson said.

Henderson said the Uvalde shootings specifically struck a nerve with him due to his mom having been a middle school theater teacher for over 40 years.

In the midst of a deep conversation with his mom, a sentence fell from her lips that ultimately inspired the entire short film.

“I think the only chance I’d have if I came face to face with the school shooter is if the shooter knew me, if the shooter remembered me, I don’t think he’d be able to harm me,” Henderson’s mom said.

Ultimately, Henderson wanted to tell the story of people who are often forgotten in school shootings. “It seems like the people who get lost in this story often are the people who work there, the teachers, the people like my mom,” Henderson said.

As the inspiration for the short film began to translate onto paper, Henderson and his co-writer decided that the school

shooting in the film would occur while a group of theater students rehearsed a Shakespeare play titled “Much Ado About Nothing,” hence the title of the film.

Henderson said he was a fan of Shakespeare and that “Much Ado About Nothing” is a popular play for middle school theater because “it’s funny and highly accessible.”

As the writing process unfolded for Henderson and his co-writer, the duo decided it was crucial to invite Moore onto the project, given their mutual trust and friendship. While Moore and Henderson had been trusted advisers for each other’s work, “Ado” was the first time they had officially worked together on a film, onboarding him as an associate producer and editor.

“I knew I wanted Maverick involved somehow, and I wanted him to be involved officially, not just kind of tangentially as a friend, but somebody who we could bring on and actually credit for doing something,” Henderson said. “Then the editing thing came next because he was the best option for us to edit the film.”

Moore said the opportunity to serve as editor for the short film was incredibly special to him.

“He really wanted to include me as an editor, and I was kind of in between projects and wasn’t sure what I was going to do, and to me it seemed like a return to my first love of filmmaking, which was editing,” Moore said. “So it was an awesome opportunity to do that. To actually collaborate closely with Sam, and to work on a project that I felt strongly about.”

Once a team was established, Henderson knew that top-notch casting was a priority to convey the emotions portrayed in the script. Henderson decided to hire a casting director in Dallas to aid him in the process.

“We were looking for, quote unquote, a star, because that’s how good we felt about the script,” Henderson said. “So we asked a lot of people, and a lot of people didn’t read the script.”

However, a silver lining emerged, and the team was able to cast Jenifer Lewis as the middle school theater teacher.

“She read the script, and she hopped on a Zoom with us, crying, talking about how she had to do the film, and she viewed it as a part of her advocacy,” Henderson said.

While Henderson said he had an incredible time working with Lewis, he said the most important part was letting her talent soar.

“I would be telling folks about directing Jenifer Lewis, and the reason why you cast someone like that is so you don’t have to.”

As the production process came to an end, “Ado” debuted in Sydney, Australia, an event Henderson said was one of the most memorable moments of



Photo courtesy of Maverick Moore

SPOTLIGHT Baylor professors Sam Henderson and Maverick Moore created the short film “Ado,” which has made the shortlist for Best Live Action Short Film at the Oscars.

his life. “It wasn’t until we got to the end of that film, when people started applauding for the film, and kept applauding, and kept applauding, went through their credits, that it kind of dawned on me that we made something that people were going to react really positively to,” Henderson said.

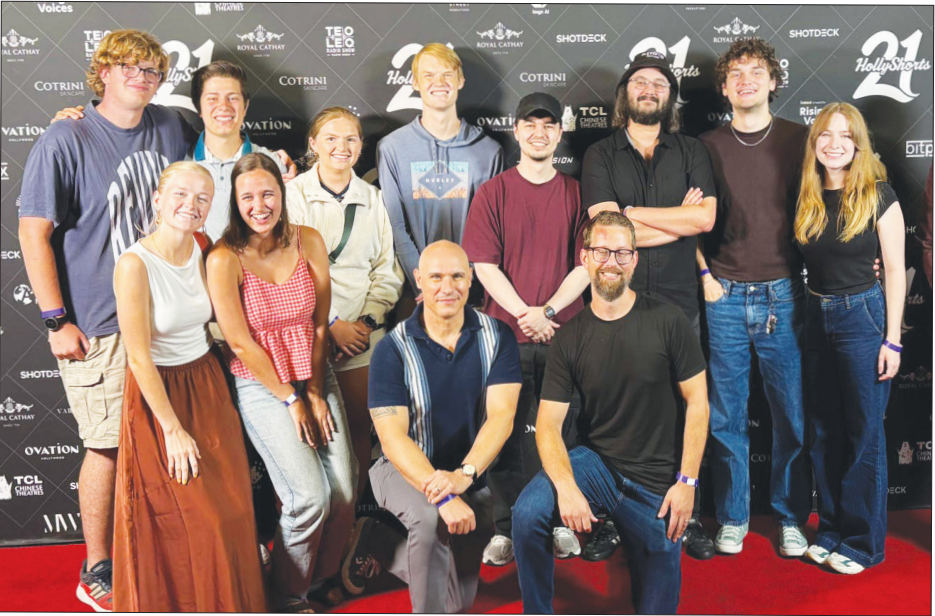
As the film’s notoriety continues to grow, Henderson said seeing his 16-year-old daughter, who plays one of the main roles, is one of the most special parts. “I’m so proud of Karis, who went toe-to-toe with Jenifer Lewis, was not intimidated, and took direction really well.”

While the Oscars process continues, Henderson said there are multiple ways to qualify a film for the Oscars. For his film in particular, they decided to take a more rigorous route to achieve qualification.

“The most common way, but also the most difficult way, is by winning an Oscar qualifying film festival, which there are about 160, 170 in the world, but domestically and internationally.”

This ultimately led to “Ado” making the shortlist for Best Live Action Short Film at the Oscars, which is a list of 15 films, and they will find out on Jan. 22 if they make it to the top five.

“As a friend and as a collaborator ... I was just thinking, ‘Oh gosh, what if the film doesn’t live up to the expectations, the hopes and dreams that he [Henderson] has,’” Moore said. “And I think to have gotten this far, it just taught me, don’t ever doubt dreams. Chase them.”



FILM CREW Students of the Baylor in Los Angeles program came to support the short film “Ado” during the Hollyshorts Film Festival in Hollywood, Calif., on Aug. 9.



SEMESTER TUNES From upbeat pop to heartfelt ballads, these are our picks to add to your playlist this semester.

Add these beats to your back-to-school playlist

KALENA REYNOLDS
Arts & Life Editor

Whether you’re looking for new tunes to add to your playlist or curious as to what other students are listening to, it’s fun to discover new music. As the 2026 spring semester begins, it’s crucial to make sure you have good music for studying, walking to class or hanging with your friends.

Here is a list of five back-to-school beats to add to your winter playlist. Some songs on the list soothe the solemn emotions that accompany the winter months, and others are meant for raising your spirits. Dive into this collection of songs from a variety of decades, genres and artists during your transition back to classes.

“BLUE MOON” BY ZARA LARSSON

After obtaining a massive spike in fans at the end of 2025, Zara Larsson continues to impress fans with her top-notch vocals and unbeatable dance skills. While she has adopted a sort of modern-day “Lisa Frank” type aesthetic, crowds can’t seem to get enough of her, and she has the lyrical chops to back it up.

“Blue Moon” by Zara Larsson is the second song on her 2025 album “Midnight Sun.” The beat is a great example of pop done well. It has an upbeat, dopamine-inducing chorus mixed with intimate, synth-driven verses. While you have probably heard her viral hit “Stateside” with PinkPantheress, dive into this deeper cut from the Swedish singer that shows her immense creativity and vocal chops.

“YOUR PLACE AT MY PLACE” BY JOSHUA SLONE

If you haven’t heard of Joshua Slone already, then do yourself a favor and spend some time weaving through his discography. His debut album, “Thinking Too Much,” was released in October 2025, and he already has nearly one million monthly listeners on Spotify. “Your Place At My Place,” arguably one of the best songs on the record, currently has around six million streams on Spotify.

Be warned, this record will cut you like a knife in the most intimate and heart-wrenching way. It’s raw and a great addition to the side table of hopeless romanticism. Add this to your back-to-school playlist for a slow jam to accompany the end of your weekday.

“BABY COME BACK” BY PLAYER

“Baby Come Back” is the perfect soundtrack for late-night drives, dancing in the kitchen with the person you love, or a post “Heated Rivalry” re-watch.

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FLU SEASON from A1

"It is recommended that they receive a flu vaccine as well to help spread," Gonzalez said. "If you're sick, stay home. Try to stay away from people that you know are sick. Also, cover your cough, cover your sneezes, wash your hands frequently and avoid touching your mouth, your eyes, your nose."

For those who do get the flu, Hess said antivirals such as Tamiflu taken within 48 hours of symptoms appearing will be most effective for relief. However, Hess has noticed a trend on TikTok to “downplay or disregard” antiviral medications such as Tamiflu due to reports of hallucinations.

“The reality is that

severe flu can also cause neuropsychiatric side effects, and it isn't clear in the information that's being shared around that the hallucinations that are being reported were not actually due to the flu itself," he said. "We've got years and years of data with it now. And it's really quite safe to take with the caveat that it can cause some nausea and vomiting."

To protect students with chronic health conditions as well as other special populations students may interact with, Gonzalez and Hess recommend students work to prevent contracting the flu. Hess said it may be helpful for students, especially if they are exhibiting

symptoms, to consider wearing face masks.

"We're not thinking exclusively about individuals here," Hess said. "We're thinking about individuals and the communities within which they interact and whether that's their nuclear family or some type of larger community, whether that be a dorm community or perhaps a shared apartment situation. Those are the circumstances where even if somebody is healthy and they get the flu, if they've got a roommate or a dormmate who has one of these chronic diseases, they could be more susceptible to a higher level of severity with this flu."



DIGGIN' UP TREASURES Fossil Friday, the weekly event led by members of Baylor's department of geosciences, draws visitors from across Texas.

FOSSIL FRIDAY from A1

preparation up close.”

Dr. Joe C. Yelderman Jr., chair of Baylor's department of geosciences, said Fossil Friday represents the university's commitment to both research and public engagement.

"This kind of outreach shows how research and education can come together," Yelderman said. "It lets our students share their expertise with the public and helps people understand the scientific process in a tangible way."

Fossil Friday continues to draw visitors from across Texas, locals and Baylor students alike, who are all curious about the work happening so close to campus.

"If a kid walks away thinking, 'That's something I could do,' then we've done our job," White said. "That's how science

grows — when people can see themselves in it.”

Though the process often appears quiet and methodical, Butler said it's filled with moments of awe and discovery.

"We're not just cleaning bones," Butler said. "We're uncovering pieces of history that tell us how these animals lived, how they died and what the environment looked like tens of thousands of years ago."

Each Fossil Friday session becomes part of a larger story, tying Baylor's research, Waco history and public curiosity together.

"This is Waco's history," Butler said. "And when people come here and see it happening in real time, they start to realize that they're a part of it, too."



RELICS OF THE PAST The Mayborn Museum Natural History Hall is filled with cabinets of fossils, artifacts and more.

WOMEN OF WACO from A1

At the end of the day, Flick said one of her passions is providing mentorship for young women and a space for them to find community. For Bevington, the main goal is to empower women to feel confident in their ability and qualifications.

"When they leave, I want them to feel inspired and like they can do anything they want in life," Bevington said. "I want people to walk away knowing that whatever they want, they have the ability to go get."

Registration for the event is \$147, and women can register on the event website. Women of Waco's next meeting will be from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Feb. 13 at the Baylor Club, and attendees can RSVP on the Women of Waco site at the QR code below.



It's friendships, but it's also inspiration. ... When they leave, I want them to feel inspired and like they can do anything they want in life. I want people to walk away knowing that whatever they want, they have the ability to go get.

JENNIFER BEVINGTON
WOMEN OF WACO MEMBER AND
HOTEL DIRECTOR OF SALES AND
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